



ANTECHINUS FULIGINOSUS, Gould.

Gould & Richter, del. et lith.  
Hullmandel & Walton, Imp.



# ANTECHINUS FULIGINOSUS, *Gould.*

## Sooty Antechinus.

*Antechinus fuliginosus*, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc. 1852.  
*Twoor-dong*, Aborigines of King George's Sound.

THIS species of *Antechinus*, which is a native of Western Australia, may be easily distinguished from the other members of the genus by its very dark colouring, a feature pervading both the upper and under surface of the animal. Up to this time, that is, after fourteen years' close attention to the natural productions of Australia, I have never seen an example of this species from any other than the western part of that country; there, however, it is very abundant, both at King George's Sound and in the vicinity of Perth. I am indebted to the researches of the late Mr. Gilbert for the following account, which, however, brief as it is, will I hope be read with interest by every true lover of zoology:—

“This is so much like the *Antechinus albipes*, that I considered it to be the same animal, until, by hunting for it myself, I found that it not only differs in habits, but is of a somewhat larger size and very much darker colour. Its favourite resorts are newly burnt spots, especially those adjacent to swamps and moist meadows. Among the clumps of the burnt stumps of coarse grass it burrows out the earth, and fills the cavity with short pieces of fine twigs and grass in the form of a round heap about two or three inches in height, the top being in most instances level with the surface of the surrounding earth; this structure is from six to twelve inches in diameter and from ten to fifteen in depth; in the top are several holes leading to galleries situated about half way down, which run horizontally among the roots of the surrounding scrub, and into one or other of which the animal escapes while the upper or loose portions of the sticks and grass are being removed. These structures are so precisely similar to the nests formed of pieces of grass and twigs of the same form and placed in similar situations by a small species of black ant, that I had passed hundreds without detecting them to be different, until the natives pointed them out to me as the nests of this animal, the only difference being the entrance-holes at the top and the absence of ants in the interior. I endeavoured to keep this species in captivity, but rarely succeeded in preserving it alive for more than a couple of days. It is exceedingly active in its habits, and when at rest the general contour of its body is short and ball-like; the eyes are black and prominent; the lower lip shows distinctly to the gape, and is of a pale lemon-yellow; it utters the singular hissing-like noise common to most of the Marsupials. It feeds at night, and appears to prey upon insects generally, as the stomachs of those I examined contained insects of various kinds.”

The whole of the upper surface dark greyish brown, interspersed with numerous longer black hairs, giving it a fuliginous or sooty hue; face of a lighter tint; the whiskers and a narrow mark round the eyes black; sides of the chest sooty grey, separated down the centre by a narrow line of buffy grey extending from the chin to the insertion of the fore legs; under surface pale greyish white; fore feet and the hinder tarsi and feet white, slightly tinted with buff; tail dark reddish brown, becoming greyish beneath; ears inclined to silvery grey.

	inches.
Length from the nose to the root of the tail . . . . .	$3\frac{1}{4}$
„ of tail . . . . .	$3\frac{1}{4}$
„ „ arm and hand . . . . .	$\frac{1}{2}$
„ „ tarsi and toes . . . . .	$\frac{5}{8}$
„ „ face from the tip of the nose to the base of the ear . .	1
„ „ ear . . . . .	$\frac{7}{16}$

The figures are of the natural size.